

Commander Gerrity's New Conference Statement

Thank you for coming today. Let me first express my personal concern as a local resident about the oil in our water. I and many members of my command live in the community; we drink the same water, and our children go to the same schools.

Briefly, this is the situation over the last few days:

- Wednesday, the Coast Guard was notified of an oil spill on the Rouge River, near the Jefferson Street bridge. Investigators initially estimated about 500 gallons of oil had been spilled into the water. We now believe that about 5,000 gallons were spilled.
- The Coast Guard notified concerned government agencies about the problem, including the Environmental Protection Agency, Detroit Water and Sewage, and the Cities of Detroit and Dearborn, as well as our Canadian counterparts.
- By 11 a.m. we were advising boaters to stay out of the area to avoid contamination of their boats and to limit as much as possible further spread of the oil.
- By 1 p.m. we placed oil containment booms to keep the oil from spreading. Later that day, observers saw that some birds were covered oil.
- Containment activities continued through the night.
- Later Wednesday, we noticed that the problem was worse than initially thought and a more massive effort would be needed to control and clean the spill. Large sheens of oil were detected in many areas, from the River Rouge all the way to Detroit River Light—27 miles of shoreline. We received many calls of oil collecting along shorelines, shore walls, and docks.
- The contamination became more widespread by Thursday, so we have expanded our interagency team of local, state, and federal agencies needed for the clean-up effort.
- At 8:20 Saturday morning a new spill of oil was sighted around the Jefferson Street Bridge. Containment boom was placed and the new spill seems to be contained within the Rouge River.

The situation now is that we—the clean-up team—are making every effort to contain the oil.

We have received many phone calls from concerned residents offering to help clean birds. Your concern is touching and appreciated. The number of birds contaminated is not great at this time, so the team is able to handle the work. We are keeping your phone numbers in case the task becomes too overwhelming for staff.

We also have been receiving calls about potential sources of who may have been responsible for the spill. We take those calls seriously and hope that only serious callers are trying to reach us.

We appreciate the community concern and support as we continue our operations.